DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 643 CG 011 228

AUTHOR Roth, Leonard
TITLE Psychological Assessment: A Rebirth or Struggle for Life?
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association (84th, Washington, D.C., September 3-7, 1976) Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Clinical Experience; Diagnostic Tests; *Doctoral Programs; Field Experience Programs; *Graduate Study; *Internship Programs; Literature Reviews; *Professional Training; *Psychological Testing; Psychologists

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of recent literature concerning the declining interest and application of psychological testing within clinical services. It reflects a dissatisfaction with personality assessment techniques primarily due to a distorted presentation by the graduate schools training applied and professional psychologists. New and innovative ways of evaluating previous validity and reliability studies of psychological test data is also presented. Evidence from direct clinical experience indicates a strong dependency upon adequate diagnostic evaluations, and continued training in this area is strongly encouraged by practitioners within institutional and community agencies. The professional school model is looked to for a resurgence and perhaps redefinition of the psychodiagnostician's role and function. (Author)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED137643

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: A REBIRTH OR STRUGGLE FOR LIFE? *

Leonard Roth, Ph.D.
Chief Psychology Consultant

New Jersey State Department of Institutions and Agencies

One would be embarrassed if at a gathering of fellow professionals the phrases, "Projective Technique," "Psychological Appraisal", or "Personality Assessment", were mentioned without certain qualifications such as "questionable validity; ambiguous standardization; and/or inadequate reliability studies." How unscientific can a psychologist become to dare trust his clinical judgment predicated upon the interpretation of such procedures? The increasing negative attitude toward testing, some say, rose due to the rapid development of community mental health treatment programs (Hertz) as well as the trend toward behavioral descriptions and associated therapy modalities (Rubin; Evans and Nelson; Lewandowski and Saccuzzo). For whatever reason, it has become increasingly apparent that some contradiction or inconsistency exists between what graduate programs in psychology have been offering students course-wise and what the consumers of psychological services actually need and expect of their psychological staff. Gentry reports that the Psychodiagnostic Laboratory of the Division of Medical Psychology within the Department of Psychiatry at Duke University handles approximately 1,000 referrals for psychological assessments yearly. Saunders points out the value of "neurodiagnostic decision making" by stating :

"In-Patient populations in which incidents of cerebral impairment

* Presented at the 84th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by Divisions 13 and 29 as well as NCGEP and ASPPP.

CG011228

HARD COPY NOT AVAILABLE
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

is high, judgments based on neuropsychological procedures (testing) can be superior in accuracy to judgments based upon neurodiagnostic tests (physiological indices) in respect to lateralization, localization, and type of pathology." Levitt's survey showed that "assessment instruments, especially projective tests, are still commonly used by psychologists in service facilities" and that, "the psychodiagnostic function remains significant in clinical settings".

Speaking as the representative of the largest consumer of psychological services in the State of New Jersey, the Department of Institutions and Agencies, it can be definitively stated that over the past two decades there has been a continuing need for psychologists who are prepared to do psychodiagnostic work utilizing the full range of intelligence and personality measures for infants, children and adults. However, to our utter amazement and dismay, students from reputable APA accredited clinical programs have graduated within the past five to ten years with doctorates in hand, not having any or minimal clinical practicum experience with personality testing and limited knowledge relative to cognitive appraisal. Levitt describes the quandry of the graduate student who, "finds himself caught between the research-based discredence of his primary teacher and the expediencies advocated by supervisors at the internship center." Garfield and Kurtz have also underscored the inadequacy of

university training in psychological test procedures. Levi and Fox's recent survey of employers of clinical psychologists revealed that, "psychological testing skills are still considered a necessary prerequisite for more than 90% of the clinical positions advertised in the APA Employment Bulletin over the calendar year 1971-1972." The author concluded that, "testing skills including those involved in projective testing, are an important part of what clinical psychologists are expected to do. The demands of clinical practice in a variety of clinical settings requires psychological testing skills."

How absurd to believe that anyone could begin a treatment regimen without a thorough and comprehensive understanding of an individual's personality development, cognitive style and perceptual well being. Kissen discusses the value of a psychological test report to the psychotherapist stating that, "it can alert the therapist to such important clinical factors as the character structure and characteristic defensive maneuvers of his patient, his expressive style, his salient psychodynamic conflicts, his psychological-mindedness and motivation for treatment, and perhaps more importantly, his typical interpersonal interaction tendencies which may very well be enacted in the form of a transference-countertransference interaction with the therapist."

Oftentimes a university faculty will offer courses which teach various testing approaches in order to primarily demonstrate their lack of experimental replication and substance rather than how to administer, score and/or interpret the test findings. The individual clinician's repetitive demonstration of a particular projective's validity and/or reliability is basically disregarded as having relatively little, if no meaning within the sphere of "hard-headed" experimental test construction and standardization. The use of projective testing provides a considerable asset as a means of teaching psychodynamic theory as well as assessing a student's potential in developing insight about psychological conflicts. Psychologists working within an institutional framework have come to recognize and appreciate the insights gleaned from the various personality measures available and proceed to recommend as well as implement treatment programs based upon such "dynamic" understanding as gained from the projective material. As Kissen remarks "inferences contained in test reports can be both valid and extremely relevant and useful, providing that ample thought goes into the psychological inference process itself." There should be an emphasis upon, "a teasing out of the desiderata with regard to structure and content which make test reports truly useful and valuable inference documents." The recent methodology to control for certain socio-cultural biases relative to intellectual appraisal as developed by Jane R. Mercer of the University of California (Riverside) is an example of concern about the, "inference process." "The new testing technique, known as the System of Multicultural

Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) is designed for use with children between the ages of 5 and 11 years and compares a child's performance with others from a similar social and cultural background instead of with a fixed universal standard."

Fortunately the academic community has allowed itself to become more open and receptive as well as willing to hear what is being said in the, "real world." The message has been loud and clear - Teach what we know about projectives in terms of both their usefulness as well as limitations! Teach how to be critical but also how to sift out the meaningful insights provided by a test battery! Do not present an unbalanced, prejudicial and circumscribed point of view offering only conclusions rather than permitting a student the opportunity to experiment, experience and arrive at his or her own conclusions regarding the value of psychological testing! Lewandowski and Saccuzzo point out certain methodological proposals to consider for future studies using personality tests. These authors state, "Control certain variables while varying others in a factorial design; examine individual as well as the group data; establish new reliable criteria and use the tests only for those critieria and cross validate all research."

Having functioned both as a clinician, teacher and administrator of a large State internship program over the past 15 years, and in so doing having had a chance to experience how productive

and helpful a comprehensive understanding of psychodiagnsotic testing can be in providing assistance in the development of broad-based treatment programs for individuals and groups, strong support for ongoing graduate and field training in this clinical area is advanced. It is with great expectation that one looks toward the development of the Professional School model to more adequately meet the psychological needs of the community as well as the individual in the training of applied psychologists. It would seem that preparation in the administration, scoring and interpretation of pscyhological tests is without doubt, a basic and unique element in the graduate training of clinical psychology students in order to be responsive to the needs of institutions, community clinics and other consumer groups, as well as public social service programs.

REFERENCES

1. Evans, I. M., and Nelson, R. O., A Curriculum for the Teaching of Behavior Assessment. American Psychologist, 1974, 29, No. 8, pages 598-606.

2. Garfield, S. L., and Kurtz, R. M., Attitudes Toward Training in Diagnostic Testing: A Survey of Directors of Internship Training. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1973, No. 40, pages 350-355.

3. Gentry, D. W., Three Models of Training and Utilization, Professional Psychology, 1974, 5, No. 2, pages 207-214.

4. Hertz, M. R., Projective Techniques in Crisis, Journal of Projective Techniques and Personality Assessment, 1970, No. 34, pages 449-467.

5. Kissen, M., The Importance of Psychological Testing for the Psychotherapy Process, Journal of Clinical Issues in Psychology, 1973, 5, No. 1, pages 11-13.

6. Kissen, M., The Status of Psychological Testing in Current Clinical Practice, Journal of Clinical Issues in Psychology, 1971, 2, No. 3, pages 20-22.

7. Levitt, E. E., Internship vs. Campus: 1964 and 1971, Professional Psychology, 1973, 4, No. 2, pages 129-132.

References

8. Levi, M.R. and Fox, H.M., Psychological Testing is Alive and Well, Professional Psychology, 1975, 7, #4, Pages

9. Lewandowski, D.G. and Saccuzzo, D.P., The Decline of Psychological Testing, Professional Psychology, 1976, 7, #2, Pages 177-184.

10. McMahon, J.M., Some Thoughts on the Relationship of Psychological Testing and Psychotherapy Supervision to Contemporary Notions of Psychotherapy Interaction, Journal of Clinical Issues in Psychology, 1975, 6, #2, Pages 7-10.

11. Psychology Briefs, APA Monitor, 7, #5, Page 13.

12. Rabin, A.I., Projective Methods: An Historical Introduction. In Rabin, A.I. (Ed) Projective Techniques in Personality Assessment, New York, Springer, 1968, Pages 3-17.

13. Saunders, T.R., Toward a Distinctive Role for the Psychologist in Neurodiagnostic Decision Making Professional Psychology, 1975, 6, #2, Pages 161-166.

14. Tolor, A., Diagnosing the State of the Diagnostic Function: An Analysis of the Literature, Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1973, 29, Pages 338-342.